

## EDRS Improves and Expedites Issuance of Death Certificates

Implementation of the department's Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS) has resulted in improved service and more timely receipt of certified copies of death certificates for the families of Alabama residents. Not only has converting to the Web-based system eliminated the need for manual processing and reviewing of paper death certificates, the quality and readability of the certificates have also improved.

As of July 20, 83 percent of death certificates processed by the Center for Health Statistics were completed electronically and more than 8,000 people were registered users of the system.

The department's Bureau of Information Technology built the system in-house, making Alabama one of the few states nationally whose systems have been constructed by department employees. The Center for Health Statistics piloted EDRS in 2011 with input from a users group.

"We brought in users for their input and so they would have buy-in," State Registrar Cathy Molchan Donald said. "We had so many people working together. One part couldn't function without the other."

Representatives from the Alabama Hospital Association, Alabama Nursing Home Association, Alabama Funeral Home Association, Alabama Funeral Directors and Morticians Association, Medical Association of the State of Alabama, and Alabama Coroners Association were all part of the development process. The electronic system went live in February 2012.

Beginning in October 2014, a regulation went into effect that requires physicians who completed 10 or more death certificates in the previous calendar year to complete death certificates electronically. Coroners, medical examiners, funeral homes, hospitals, nursing homes and hospices must also use EDRS.

With EDRS, neither the medical certifier nor the funeral home staff have to wait until the paper death certificate



**CHS and IT Team Help Make EDRS Successful.**  
Current members of the team shown, left to right are, front row: Jody Mitchell, Jane McMunn, State Registrar Cathy Molchan Donald; second row: Joan Styres, Jill Brewer, Brenda Brugh, Crystal Steen; third row: Randy Coon, Melissa Holmes, Summer Weaver, Jay Taylor, Mek Pinrat. (James Ramuchak is not pictured.)

is sent to them for completion. Any party, funeral home, medical certifier, or facility of death, can start the death record in EDRS. They then send an electronic notification to the other party(ies) in the process letting them know that a death record is in EDRS awaiting their attention. The record will also show up on the assigned users' "Home Page." This automation eliminates the need to hand deliver or mail a death certificate to the county health department for processing.

In the past, local vital statistics registrars sometimes would find errors that would delay the filing of the paper death certificate. Because EDRS contains built-in edits, errors are reduced and inconsistent information can be verified or corrected while the user is entering the information into EDRS.

Features of the system that help improve the quality of death records include the following:

- Correction of common mistakes such as obvious date disparities

*continued on page 3*

# Courageous Public Health Nurse Meets Man She Rescued After Crash

A poignant reunion was held in late May when a young man named Daniel was formally introduced to Nikki Turner. Their emotional initial meeting would not have been possible had the public health nurse from Lee County not intervened when coming upon a highway collision three years ago.

Nikki and her husband saw the flying dust, debris and a car rolling over. Quickly exiting the truck, Nikki didn't hesitate to run to the bloody scene and move one of the occupants of the upside-down car. Blood was everywhere. While she was frustrated that she could not remove the driver or even turn off the ignition, she acted at once to establish the driver's breathing, tried to stop his bleeding, and stayed by his side. With 20 years of nursing experience, Nikki knew at once how life-threatening his injuries were, including open skull fractures, so she adamantly insisted that the Life Flight helicopter transport him to trauma care.

The collision occurred on a Saturday afternoon in 2013 when Daniel and a fellow band member were on their way to a performance. Their story was published in the October 2013 issue of Alabama's Health.



**Nikki Turner is shown with Daniel.**

After surviving numerous serious operations that included brain surgery, as well as spending weeks in a coma, enduring longtime hospitalizations out of town, and undergoing the rigors of extensive rehabilitation, Daniel has progressed markedly. As a result of his near-fatal collision, Daniel sustained a variety of complex injuries. With the full support and prayers of his extraordinary family and friends, he has dealt with the multiple challenges those with debilitating traumatic brain injuries (TBI) must meet. His continuing rehab includes learning how to walk and talk and perform basic tasks again.

Daniel has turned a corner and is thankful for a second chance at life, his father said. He has come a long way and has lived through many dark days throughout his long recovery and rehabilitation that continues to improve his abilities.

"Daniel still has limited use of the right side of his body, but we are getting better with each therapy session," his father explained. "Even with extensive fractures of his face and head, his features did not shift out of place and are back to the way they were. Thank God for miracles."

As a result of his massive head injury, he was essentially scalped. The plastic surgeons at UAB Hospital, however, were miraculously able to transplant hair to his scalp and improve his appearance. In fact, the plastic surgeon who performed his surgery now uses before and after photos of Daniel as a successful model to instruct his students.

A good friend of Daniel's parents is Marcy Gilder, a former Lee County Health Department employee who hired Nikki. Marcy arranged for Nikki to meet with Daniel and his parents at their home.

*continued on page 3*

## Alabama Department of Public Health

### Mission

To serve the people of Alabama by assuring conditions in which they can be healthy.

### Value Statement

The purpose of the Alabama Department of Public Health is to provide caring, high quality and professional services for the improvement and protection of the public's health through disease prevention and the assurance of public health services to resident and transient populations of the state regardless of social circumstances or the ability to pay.

The Department of Public Health works closely with the community to preserve and protect the public's health and to provide caring quality services.

## Alabama's Health

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**Thomas M. Miller, M.D.** ..... State Health Officer

**Jim McVay, Dr. P.A.** ..... Director, Bureau of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease

**Arrol Sheehan, M.A.** ..... Editor

**Takenya S. Taylor, J.D.** ..... Contributing Editor

**Noelle Ahmann** ..... Graphic Designer

### **Crash, continued from page 2**

It was difficult for Nikki to wait while the doorbell rang for the meeting. She was very uneasy about what to say and do, especially whether she should acknowledge that her presence and quick actions helped save his life. Maybe that is because she spent many sleepless nights worrying about Daniel, even though she did not know him at the time. She knew that his outcome was grim.

“I questioned whether doing the right thing was indeed the right thing for him,” Nikki said. Nursing was her lifelong ambition and calling, yet Nikki stopped teaching CPR classes and even questioned the practice of nursing in general.

When they met, however, Nikki was amazed at Daniel’s substantial progress and positive attitude. Although his functionality is limited, Daniel has learned to drive a specially outfitted vehicle, is increasingly independent, goes out with friends, and is

grateful to his Good Samaritan Nikki and all the others in the medical and rehabilitation fields who continue to advance his recovery.

“This meeting was more than just a meeting as many issues were resolved just by seeing him,” Nikki said. Daniel’s mother said that just since January 2016 he has made dramatic improvements.

As Nikki suspected, Daniel asked her if she had saved his life. Nikki awaited a nod from Daniel’s mother and father before saying her actions did indeed enable him to get the care he needed. Then Daniel and Nikki hugged.

“I am so glad to know that he will now have a chance at living a meaningful life in many areas, even though the life he is living will be different from the one he and his family envisioned.”

“One of Daniel’s major goals is to be able to play drums again with two hands,” Nikki said. “I have an invite when that happens.”

### **EDRS, continued from page 1**

- Drop-down boxes for common items such as state or city names
- Spell-check dictionary
- Ability of users to log in in real time
- Social Security Number verification prior to registration to reduce amendments

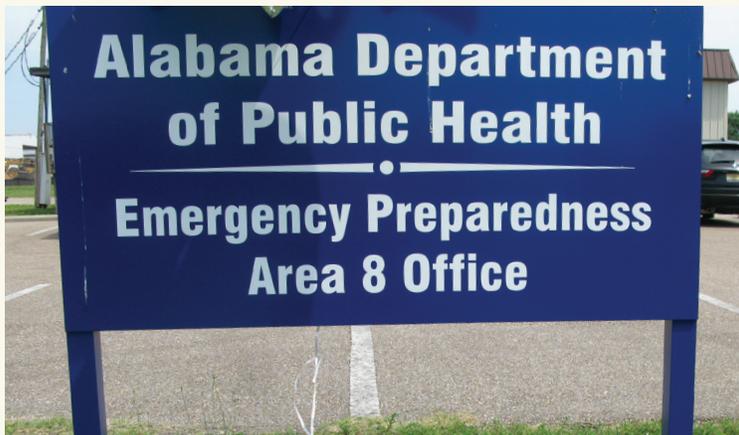
Jane McMunn of the Bureau of Information Technology said the team is constantly upgrading and enhancing the system. “We continue to strive to do better and are making progress toward our goal. We can help prevent delays in filing death certificates because we are now

able to produce reports showing records that are lingering in the system.”

The Center for Health Statistics EDRS Help Desk team of Jill Brewer, Jody Mitchell and Joan Styres is available to answer questions and even patiently walk users through issues by telephone when needed.

The success story of EDRS was presented to members of the State Committee of Public Health at its July 20 meeting. Physicians praised the efficiency of the system and the courteous assistance consistently provided by public health employees.

## **PHA 8 EP Open House**



**The Emergency Preparedness staff of Public Health Area 8 hosted an open house on May 25 at their new location on the Trenholm State Community College’s John Patterson Campus in Montgomery. Pictured, left to right, are area staff members Cyndi Tereszkievicz, Patti Stadlberger, Assistant Area Administrator Connie King, Donna Johnson, Mary Conway and Tim Reynolds.**

# Public Health Succeeds in Using SAVE Program for License or Permit Applicants

The Beason-Hammon Alabama Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act of 2011 requires every person or sole proprietorship applying for certain licenses or permits in Alabama to either demonstrate U.S. citizenship, or, if the person is an alien, prove lawful presence in this country. The purpose of the legislation is to discourage illegal immigration.

The department recently became authorized to use the federal government's Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) Program to verify an applicant's immigration status or naturalized/derived citizenship status. Bureau of Environmental Services employees Maria Alexander, Phyllis Mardis and Mark Sestak are authorized to submit applications to the SAVE program from the Central Office.

To prepare employees who receive initial permits or renewal applications in public health offices statewide, the Bureau of Environmental Services and the Distance Learning and Telehealth Division produced a training video for users that is available through the Learning Content Management System. Assistant General Counsel Karen Bishop was the spokesperson for the training video that included actors from the department.

To comply with this law, applications must include these documents:

- A signed declaration
- A legible photocopy or digital copy of a document demonstrating U.S. citizenship or lawful presence in the U.S.

A business entity must provide a declaration of business ownership structure if the type of ownership or business entity is not clearly indicated on the application.

Permits and licenses affected include the following:

- Food service establishment permits
- Hotel/motel permits
- Emergency medical service personnel and medical provider licenses
- Radioactive material licenses

The department only verifies the status of the individual who is licensed or permitted. The training video emphasizes that every applicant is required to provide this information regardless of race, color or national origin. Citizenship cannot be assumed based on appearance, and demonstration of U.S. citizenship or lawful permanent residence is only required once. If applicants wish to challenge their immigration status, an appeals process is available.

To learn more about this Alabama law, view a listing of each of the permits and licenses subject to this law, and download the declaration form, please visit <http://adph.org/generalcounsel/Default.asp?id=7629>



**Mark Sestak, Deputy Director, Division of Food, Milk, and Lodging, Bureau of Environmental Services, submits an application to verify an applicant's immigration or naturalized/derived citizenship status.**

## Environmental Q and A

**QUESTION:** What is Alabama's rule on green funerals?

**RESPONSE:** This is becoming a popular topic. Alabama does not have any rules or regulations concerning "green funerals." There is no state law that a body must be embalmed or placed in a casket prior to burial; but, a body must be embalmed or cremated before leaving the state. However, a local municipality

or county commission may have local requirements, so please check with the appropriate authority before considering a green funeral. We are aware of only one green cemetery that has been approved in North Alabama. The Alabama Board of Funeral Service can possibly give you additional information concerning the bonding requirement prior to developing a green cemetery, if that is your area of concern as well.

## Smoke-Free Shoals: Hope for the Homeless Provides Burp Cloths and Brings Awareness to Dangers of Secondhand Smoke to Babies

The Smoke-Free Shoals: Hope for the Homeless Coalition, based in northwest Alabama, educates communities about the health harms of secondhand smoke, and advocates for stronger smoke-free protections for all residents and workers. Smoke-Free Shoals has joined forces with Hope for the Homeless, a nonprofit corporation dedicated to educating and protecting the public from the detrimental effects of substance abuse and serves as a resource while assisting homeless individuals affected by substance abuse and mental health issues.

Recently, the coalition applied for and received a \$4,000 grant from Northwest AL RC&D. The \$4,000 enabled them to purchase 1,900 burp cloths with the international “no smoking” sign that states “Smoke-Free Baby” in block-child/friendly, eye-catching font. Members were also able to purchase storage bins, and much needed shelving units. With additional grant money from other sources, the coalition was able to purchase pamphlets, folders, bins, and DVDs on secondhand smoke and the family unit.

Melanie Dickens, Smoke-Free Shoals Coalition president, says, “Secondhand smoke is an issue that affects everyone, but newborns are greatly affected in utero and after birth. We coordinated with the Food and Drug Administration, Alabama Department of Public Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Riverbend Mental Health, local hospitals, health departments, and breastfeeding peer counselors to determine a strategic way to educate and inform parents about exposure to secondhand smoke and its risks.” Secondhand smoke can lead to the following: Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), low birth weight, weak lungs, asthma, chronic lung issues, ear infections, and loss of hearing in babies and young children.

The burp cloths were distributed during a breastfeeding awareness celebration at Lauderdale County Health Department on August 19, 2016. Parents, children, staff and the local community were invited to take part in an educational and informative program on the benefits of breastfeeding.



**Shown sporting the burp cloths are Helen Keller Hospital representatives Christa Martin, Rebecca Mullins and Renee Mullins along with Smoke-free Shoals President Melanie Dickens, at right.**



**Breastfeeding Peer Counselors Amanda Barton and Richelle Cox are shown at an August breastfeeding awareness celebration at the Lauderdale County Health Department.**

## Family Thanks Marshall County Team

*The Marshall County Health Department received a handwritten thank you note, excerpted below, thanking the staff for their support during a difficult time. The sentiment addressed confirms how much the WIC Program and public health makes a difference in the lives of Alabamians.*

Dear Team Members of Guntersville Health Department,

We are writing to thank you for the role you played in the financial support we received over the past 21 months. It has been a humbling, yet an uplifting experience, through job loss, selling our home, childbirth, and finally the security of prosperous employment.

Striving to be good stewards, we have earnestly sought to reduce our expenses while increasing our income. Through these efforts, and the Grace of God, we feel it is the right time to withdraw our participation from the WIC program.

We hope many other families can gain financial independence through timely care, encouragement, and support.

God Bless, and Thank You

## Zika Talk



Central Office employees learned more about the Zika virus disease from the experts when Kelly Stevens, director of the Infectious Diseases and Outbreaks Division, and Dr. Mary McIntyre, then Assistant State Health Officer for Disease Control and Prevention, made a PowerPoint presentation and answered questions at a noontime session on July 12.

## NRC Congratulates Alabama on 50th Anniversary as 'Agreement State'

Stephen G. Burns, chairman of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, extended congratulations to the state on its 50th anniversary of becoming an "Agreement State."

In a letter to Gov. Robert Bentley, Burns said, "We commend the State on its successful efforts throughout the years in regulating the safe use of radioactive materials in Alabama, thereby protecting public health and safety, as was committed to in the Agreement. We encourage your continued support of the important services provided by the Agreement State Program."

On July 25, 1966, then Gov. George C. Wallace entered into an agreement with the Atomic Energy Commission to assume regulatory responsibility for certain radioactive materials under Section 274 of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended.

Burns' letter further states, "Please extend our congratulations to the staff and management of the Alabama Department of Public Health for their successful implementation of the Alabama Agreement State Program."

David Walter, director of the Office of Radiation Control, said, "We are excited to celebrate our 50th anniversary as an Agreement State. Through the years we have strived to use a common sense approach to maintain a strong radiation safety culture. We will continue to work as partners in radiation safety with our licensees and registrants in an ongoing effort to minimize unnecessary radiation exposures to the public, the occupationally exposed worker, and the environment."

The Office of Radiation Control ensures the protection of the public from excess exposure to ionizing radiation through a variety of activities, including the following:

- Registering, licensing and inspection of uses of ionizing radiation
- Performing environmental monitoring
- Providing emergency training and preparedness through public and professional education

# Motivational Moments

## Offense or Defense- Attitude Matters

If you think about it, the Alabama Department of Public Health is like a sports team. You have an offense and a defense. Your “offense” are all the divisions and employees that work directly with citizens who need your attention and expertise for a current situation or condition. These divisions are your county health departments, ALL Kids, WIC, home health, licenses and permits, emergency medical services and more. Your “defense” are all the divisions and employees who work to bring awareness, prevention and preparedness. Some of these divisions are your environmental services, wellness, injury prevention, inspections, surveys, health improvement planning and more.

And like in sports, the one thing that can ruin or sour a game - become a complete turn off - is when a player(s) shows poor sportsmanship. The attitudes of the players matter. So what about yours? Customer service is driven by each employee and supervisor displaying their best including their smile, friendly greeting, open posture, eye contact, use of the customer’s name, interest in what the customer is saying, and deliberate attention to the customer. Here are some interesting thoughts that validate the importance of attitude.

- The top reason (82%) for customer loss is that customers feel poorly treated. Source: Zendesk 2015
- Over 1 million people view tweets about customer service every week. Roughly 80% of those tweets are negative or critical in nature. Source: Touch Agency
- Customers care more about service quality and attitude than about service speed. Empathetic interactions bring nine times more customer engagement. Source: Gallup Poll 2015
- 86% of customers are willing to pay up to 25% more for a better customer experience. Source: RightNow 2015
- 70% of the customer experiences are based on how the customer feels he or she is being treated. Source: McKinsey 2015

- Friendly service often begets a feeling of trust between a customer and company that transcends other factors. Source: Unitiz 2013

## Elvis and Customer Service

Have you ever dreamed about what it would be like to be Beyonce, Mick Jagger, Celine Dion or -- even Elvis Presley? You are in front of the mirror getting ready for work. A song comes on and you grab your brush, deodorant can or hair dryer. You raise the “microphone” to your lips and start singing! You may even start moving to the music or imitating the hip action of Elvis. At some point in our lives, we all have done this.

Our customer service needs to be similar. Well, don’t try to be Elvis with a customer, but think about what it is like to BE the customer. Think about this for a minute. We see the world through our own eyes. Everything that happens to us is based on how we perceive it, what we see, feel and experience. We tend to believe that others experiencing the same thing will react the same way we do. But our customers are not us. They don’t see things the way we do. They don’t experience things like we do.

Just like “acting” like your favorite singer, get your mind set on what the customer is feeling and thinking. Don’t just “think about the customer.” Think what it is like to “be the customer.” What brings customers to your door? What kind of urgency are they in? What situation is prompting their need? What are they feeling - doubt, fear, skepticism, sadness? What might their “hot buttons” be? How can their real situation be accommodated? What service will meet their need?

“Being” your customer can only help you provide them with a better service, and if you can help people achieve their goals, then this ultimately leads to more success for you and the Alabama Department of Public Health.

By SHARLEEN SMITH, Director of Professional Development, Troy University Continuing Education.

## Employee Relations Section Provides Support and Guidance

The Employee Relations Section of the Office of Human Resources provides a point of access for Alabama Department of Public Health employees to address their concerns and seek guidance. The section relocated its office to the 16th floor of The RSA Tower on July 25 in order to provide a more private and confidential setting for employees.

In an e-mail message, Employee Relations Officer, Danita Rose (Equal Employment Opportunity Coordinator), reminded employees about the Department's policies for addressing employee-related matters and resolving problems in the workplace. Public Health employees with complaints are encouraged to first discuss the problem with their immediate supervisor in an effort to bring resolution. If the employee believes his or her immediate supervisor is biased or may have a conflict of interest in the matter, the employee may address the problem with the next higher-level supervisor. Employees with complaints of alleged discrimination related to Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) rights based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, gender, gender identity, disability or genetic information may submit them directly to Employee Relations. The Employee Relations Section maintains an "open door" policy to ensure employees may discuss a complaint without fear of reprisal.

Also, one of Ms. Rose's responsibilities is to coordinate the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). This is a short-term counseling and referral service that provides professional, confidential assistance to employees and their dependents who are experiencing problems likely to affect their family life and job performance. Some problems addressed include supervisor/subordinate conflict, financial difficulties, substance abuse, stress, anxiety, and grief management.

The office staff consists of Glynis Rush, Equal Employment Officer, and Donna Barron, Administrative Support Assistant, who joined the team on August 16. Employees wishing to schedule an appointment may contact Ms. Barron. Ms. Rose and her staff look forward to serving those who may have a need. Even though the world of Employee Relations changes with time, the most important element for successful relationships is communication.

Contact information is as follows:

Alabama Department of Public Health, Office of Human Resources  
Employee Relations Section  
The RSA Tower, 201 Monroe Street, Suite 1698  
Montgomery, AL 36130  
(334) 206-9494



**Employee Relations Officer Danita Rose (seated) is shown with Donna Barron and Glynis Rush.**

## Commendations

If you would like to praise employees for their accomplishments, send letters of commendation to the State Health Officer or the employee's supervisor and a copy by e-mail to [Arrol.Sheehan@adph.state.al.us](mailto:Arrol.Sheehan@adph.state.al.us) for inclusion in this list. Four items are needed: the employee's name, work unit, name of the person making the commendation, and his or her city and state.

### **Glenda Adams**

Center for Health Statistics  
from Dorothy Presley  
Stone Mountain, Ga.

### **Leslie Britt**

### **Harvey Farrior**

### **Janis Pritchett**

Financial Services  
from Sherry Bradley  
Montgomery, Ala.

### **Joan Carlisle**

Elmore County Health Department  
from Judith Ford, CRNP  
Wetumpka, Ala.

### **Kathie Cleckler**

### **Kimberly Freeman**

### **Kay Mathews**

Center for Health Statistics  
from Cori Cook  
Lanett, Ala.

### **Carol Dorsey and team**

### **Erin Martini**

### **Drew Sheehan**

Bureau of Clinical Laboratories  
from A.G. "Spud" Woodward  
Brunswick, Ga.

### **Phyllis Mardis**

Bureau of Environmental Services  
from Carolyn Hutcheson  
Montgomery, Ala.

### **Mitzi Chesser Waldo**

Bureau of Environmental Services  
from Maria Zemira Nociti  
Brugherio, Italy

### **LaShunda Williams**

Center for Health Statistics  
from Alphonzo Jones  
Jonesboro, Ga.

## Self-Management Education Classes Aid People with Diabetes

People with diabetes who have participated in Diabetes Self-Management Education (DSME) classes have seen weight loss, better control of their blood sugar, and lower blood pressure, and as a result have avoided hospitalization and reduced the long-term complications of diabetes.

Diabetes is a chronic disease that requires a person to make multiple self-management decisions throughout the day, and DSME assists the individual with diabetes make the right decisions.

The program helps facilitate the knowledge, skill, and ability necessary for diabetes self-care. In DSME, diabetes educators use patient-centered coaching that includes the following areas:

- Healthy eating
- Being active
- Monitoring
- Medication
- Coping
- Problem solving

Trainers include nurses, dietitians and pharmacists, among others. The DSME process incorporates the needs, goals, and life experiences of the person with diabetes and is guided by evidence-based standards. The overall objectives of DSME include supporting informed decision-making, self-care behaviors, problem-solving and active collaboration with the health care team, and improving clinical outcomes and health status.

"DSME services are proven to help people living with diabetes control their risk for complications and thereby improve their overall quality of life," said Diabetes Program Director Brandi B. Pouncey.

Class participants are advised to first check with their health insurance company to see if DSME is covered and then consult with their doctor about obtaining a referral. Studies have shown DSME to be cost effective because it reduces hospital admissions, readmissions and complications. An interactive map on [www.adph.org/diabetes](http://www.adph.org/diabetes) under the self-management education tab shows the locations of all the accredited/recognized programs throughout the state.

Diabetes was the seventh leading cause of death in Alabama in 2013. According to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, the overall prevalence of diabetes in 2014 was 12.9 percent, affecting approximately 627,000 Alabamians. Alabama is among the five states with the highest prevalence of diabetes in the nation.

"Consult your doctor about getting a referral now," Pouncey said. "Each patient must make the daily decisions needed to control diabetes and live a healthier life."

Please visit [adph.org/diabetes](http://adph.org/diabetes) for more information.

# Retirees

The following departmental employees have retired recently.

## April

**Melinda Adams**

Limestone County Health  
Department

**Kay Batchelor**

Winston County Health  
Department

**Reba Gay**

Cleburne County Health  
Department

**Donald Gee**

Limestone County Health  
Department

**Patricia Geiger**

Family Health Services

**Geneva Hunter**

Family Health Services

**Machelle Jackson**

Marengo County Health  
Department

**Rita Mitchell**

Public Health Area 9

**Teresa Mulkey**

Center for Health Statistics

## May

None

## June

**Donna Beavers**

Shelby County Health Department

**Anita Collier**

Immunization

**Sandra Faulkner**

Health Care Facilities

**Andrea George**

Public Health Area 2

**Deborah Hoffman**

Public Health Area 9

**Sandra Looney**

Etowah County Health  
Department

**Cynthia McAlpin**

Covington County Health  
Department

**Tina Pippin**

Family Health Services

**Deborah Woolbright**

Public Health Area 3

## July

**Lee Barnes**

Health Care Facilities

**Stacy Camp**

Limestone County Health  
Department

**Lylita Crayton**

Lee County Health Department

**Carol Dorsey**

Mobile Clinical Laboratory

**Judith Ford**

Elmore County Health  
Department

**Sherry Ford**

Madison County Health  
Department

**Tena Galloway**

DeKalb County Health  
Department

**Barbara Inge**

Information Technology

**Anna Johnson**

Blount County Health Department

**Lora Lane**

Winston County Health  
Department

**Kenneth McBeth**

Center for Emergency  
Preparedness

**Jeffrey Meank**

Health Care Facilities

**Elizabeth Nichols**

Family Health Services

**Phyllis Redmon**

Escambia County Health  
Department

**Lawrence Robey, M.D.**

Madison County Health  
Department

**Edra Self**

Etowah County Health  
Department

**Ruth Taunton**

Elmore County Health  
Department

**Angeles Whitaker**

Russell County Health Department

**Debra White**

Cleburne County Health  
Department



**Coworkers, family and friends honored Anna Johnson upon her retirement after 35 years of service with the Blount County Health Department. The senior nutritionist is shown with Assistant Area Administrator Mark Johnson.**



**The Bureau of Family Health Services honored nurse practitioner Beth Nichols with a retirement reception on May 24. She served public health for more than 35 years. She is shown with State Health Officer Dr. Tom Miller.**

# Conference Focuses on Addressing Stress, Trauma and Suicide Prevention in Community Responders

The statistics are sobering. One person dies by suicide every 13 minutes, and every day over 100 Americans take their own lives. During 2014, there were 42,773 deaths by suicide in the U.S. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for 15- through 24-year-olds, and is the 10th leading cause of death for people of all ages.

Alabama has shown a pattern of higher rates of suicide than the U.S. national average since 1990. In 2013, 719 Alabamians died by suicide. Suicide is the sixth leading cause of death among white males in Alabama and suicide rates are particularly high among white males ages 85 and older. Each person's death by suicide intimately affects at least six other people, with more than 200,000 newly bereaved each year.

To address suicide prevention among community responders, the Alabama Suicide Prevention and Resource Coalition (ASPARC) and partners in the Center for Emergency Preparedness and Social Work Division hosted a conference and training titled, "On the Front Lines: Addressing Stress, Trauma, and Suicide Prevention in Community Responders." More than 150 people attended this highly successful conference at the RSA Activity Center in Montgomery September 7.

In addition, Gov. Robert Bentley proclaimed the week of September 5 through 11 as Suicide Prevention Week in order to draw attention to this tragic cause of death. The national theme for the week was "Connect. Communicate. Care."



**The Alabama Suicide Prevention and Resource Coalition and partners in the Center for Emergency Preparedness and Social Work Division hosted the conference during Suicide Prevention Week.**

## Suicide Risk Factors

Risk factors for suicide remain essentially the same regardless of where a person lives. A few examples of major risk factors for suicidal behaviors include the following:

- A history of depression, bipolar disorder, or other mental illness diagnoses
- A serious personal loss or number of losses and defeats taken personally
- Low self-esteem and self-loathing
- Social isolation
- Believing there is no hope for feeling better
- Chronic alcohol or other drug use
- Easy access to the means for dying, such as firearms, lethal drugs and poisons

Usually suicide is the result of a combination of these factors. Factors that help protect against suicide and suicidal behaviors include high self-esteem, social connectedness, problem-solving skills, supportive family and friends.

Help is available for people contemplating suicide. The person should talk to someone such as a community mental health agency, a school counselor or psychologist, a suicide prevention/crisis intervention center, a private therapist, a family physician, a religious/spiritual leader, or call 1-800-273-8255 (TALK).

For more information, contact ASPARC at (205) 226-2400 or [ASPARC.org](http://ASPARC.org). Resource information is available at [adph.org/injuryprevention](http://adph.org/injuryprevention).



**Partners in the conference, shown left to right, are Dr. David Coombs, Dr. Judith Harrington, Renae Carpenter, Bill Kennedy and Elana Parker Merriweather.**

# Officials Gather to Break Ground for Bullock County Health Department

State Health Officer Dr. Tom Miller joins Acting Area 8 Administrator Connie King and other county and city officials at the groundbreaking of the Bullock County Health Department in Union Springs September 13. It is anticipated the building will be completed by June 2017. Dr. Miller (below) addresses attendees at the ceremony.



LaTisha McCord photos

## WIC Team Hosts Baby Shower

**Breastfeeding and pregnant women were the guests for a baby shower hosted by the WIC team at the Madison County Health Department. Employees provided donations, refreshments and decorations for the special event, held during August, Breastfeeding Awareness Month.**



# Award-winning Teen Videos Promote Prevention of Mosquito-borne Diseases

High school-age Alabama students brought their creativity to the fore this summer when they produced videos on preventing mosquito-borne diseases and competed for generous prizes. Students ages 15-18 produced short videos and uploaded them to Vimeo or YouTube. The purpose of the contest was to educate Alabamians about protecting themselves, their families, and their friends from mosquito bites and mosquito-borne diseases such as the Zika virus.

The top videos were selected by a panel of judges comprised of Alabama Environmental Health Association (AEHA) board members Melanie Boggan, Cindy Goocher and Trina Parker. AEHA furnished the monetary awards.

Prizes were awarded to the following:

- First Place: "Fight the Bite," Lakyn Shepard, Bob Jones High School, Madison, \$1,000
- Second Place: "Don't Let Zika Slap You In the Face," Cassie Volkin, Bob Jones High School, Madison, \$750
- Third Place: "Zika Virus Information Video," Faron High, Elba High School, Elba, \$500
- Honorable Mentions: \$100  
Amaya Brisbon, Booker T. Washington Magnet High School, Montgomery  
Hailey Gay, Homeschooled, Hillsboro  
Chenoa Gentle, Bob Jones High School, Madison  
Carley Sims, Huntsville High School, Huntsville

"These entertaining videos emphasize the need to eliminate standing water and other mosquito breeding

sites, as well as ways to prevent mosquito bites," Sherry Bradley, director of the Bureau of Environmental Services, said. "Mosquitoes that spread the Zika virus are aggressive daytime biters but will also bite at night, and currently there is no vaccine available."

The prize-winning videos are highlighted on ADPH's social media sites (Facebook, Twitter and Google Plus) and on [adph.org/mosquito](http://adph.org/mosquito).

## Fight the (Mosquito) Bite



**Sherry Bradley, left, of the Bureau of Environmental Services and Jennifer Sumner of the Website/Social Media Branch duke it out in the fight against mosquito-borne diseases.**



**Trauma is the leading cause of death to Alabamians between the ages of 1 and 46. Doctors, nurses and prehospital providers gained an understanding of the Alabama Statewide Trauma and Health Systems during a satellite conference and webcast June 27. This voluntary system improves the chances of survival, regardless of proximity to urban trauma and stroke centers.**

**Shown, left to right, first row are Dr. Sarah Najziger, John Blue, Joe Acker, Glenn Davis, Denise Louthain and David Garmon; second row, Dr. Sidney Brevard, Dion Schultz, Dr. Elwin Crawford, Augustine Amenyah, Verla Thomas and Choona Lang.**

# Community Fluoridation Program Helps Maintain Alabamians' Oral Health

Alabama's Community Water Fluoridation Program works to prevent tooth decay and help maintain healthy teeth by promoting fluoridation. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recognized fluoridation of community water supplies as one of the 10 great public health achievements of the 20th century and the single most effective public health measure to prevent dental decay. Throughout more than 70 years of research and practical experience, the best available scientific evidence has consistently indicated that fluoridation of community water supplies is safe and effective.

Despite the high volume of scientific evidence from respected sources, fluoridation remains a controversial issue. Over the past few years, State Dental Director Dr. Robert Meador, Assistant State Dental Director Sherry Goode, and State Water Fluoridation Coordinator Ashley Vice, have prevailed in battles with a number of municipalities seeking to remove fluoride from their drinking water. Water systems in Alexander City, Arab, Fairhope, Millbrook and Sylacauga have recently considered dropping fluoridation, but each decided to continue.

The Arab Water Board actually stopped fluoridating. The City of Arab then took legal action against the board to have fluoride reintroduced into the municipal water supply as directed by the city council. At a court hearing in Guntersville, Dr. Meador spent nearly two hours being questioned by attorneys representing the water board about fluoridation safety and effectiveness. A representative from the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Dentistry, Dr. Steve Mitchell, also testified in favor of fluoridation.

The judge filed an injunction for the board to return to fluoridation and denied the water board's appeal. The case was taken to the Alabama Supreme Court which upheld the court's ruling. Fluoridation has been thoroughly tested in the U.S. court system and no court has ever determined fluoridation to be unlawful.

Ms. Vice is conducting a study that looks at the impact of fluoridation on Medicaid dental reimbursement rates for decay-related procedures in Alabama. Preliminary research indicated in a sample of counties that reimbursements per patient for decay-related procedures go down as fluoridation level rises from 0 to the recommended level, 0.7 parts per million.

Unlike states that mandate fluoridation of public water systems, Alabama leaves the decision to fluoridate to the individual water boards and municipalities. Alabama ranks 23rd among the states in the percentage of residents receiving fluoridated water, 78.4 percent.

To help educate water system employees and record information on fluoridation methods for CDC, Oral Health staff visit every fluoridated system in the state at least once every three years to ask what they can do to help, present water operators a fact-filled informational packet, answer questions, and promote the benefits of fluoridation.

Information provided includes a table with myths and facts about community water fluoridation, including documentation. For example, a Texas study listed confirmed that the state saved \$24 per child, per year in Medicaid expenditures because of the cavities that were prevented by drinking fluoridated water. A New York study found that Medicaid enrollees in counties where fluoridation was rare needed 33.4 percent more fillings, root canals, and extractions than those in counties where fluoridated water was much more prevalent.

Policy statements and resolutions from 11 scientific organizations supporting fluoridation are furnished along with water fluoridation statistics. Nationally, community water fluoridation is increasing. More than 125 national and international health, science, and professional organizations recognize the public health benefits of community water fluoridation for preventing dental decay.

For more information, visit <http://adph.org/oralhealth>.

## Community Water Fluoridation Facts

- Tooth decay, which fluoride fights, is the most common chronic health problem facing children in the U.S. It is four times more common than asthma.
- The average cost for a community to fluoridate water is estimated to range from approximately \$3 per year per person in small communities to approximately \$0.50 per year per person in large communities.
- For most cities, every \$1 invested in water fluoridation yields \$38 savings in dental treatment costs. An individual can have a lifetime of fluoridated water for less than the cost of a silver filling.

# Just how much is .7 parts per million?

This amount of fluoride in your water

# WILL

## Save money on dental costs

For most cities every \$1 spent on fluoridation saves \$38 in dental costs. It also saves taxpayer money by saving state Medicaid dollars that would be spent on costly dental treatments.

## Protect from cavities, pain, and tooth decay

Fluoridation benefits people of all ages by strengthening the enamel of the teeth, which leads to fewer cavities, fewer extractions in children, more adults keeping their teeth for a lifetime, and keeping older adults from developing decay on the roots of their teeth.

## Contribute to quality of life

Studies show that teens with dental pain are 4 times more likely to earn lower grades, and children with poor dental health are 3 times more likely to miss school. Poor dental health can also be a barrier to job opportunity and social interaction.



**ORAL HEALTH OFFICE**  
Promoting Smiles Across a Lifetime

## Did you know the amount of fluoride in your water is equal to...



This amount of fluoride in your water

# WON'T

## Cause cancer, arthritis, or other serious health problems

More than 3,200 studies have been published on the subject of fluoridation. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that “panels of experts from different health and scientific fields have provided strong evidence that water fluoridation is safe and effective.” More than 125 leading health organizations support fluoridation including the American Dental Association and the American Medical Association. In fact, there is no major health organization that does not support community water fluoridation.

## Cause dental fluorosis, or white streaks in the teeth

The level of fluoride in your water is set at .7 parts per million, which has been researched and set by the CDC to protect the teeth from decay without causing fluorosis. The highest risk for dental fluorosis occurs between infancy and eight years old, but occurs from exposure to more than five times the level of fluoride than is possible from community water fluoridation alone.

## Harm animals or plant life in the area

Fluoride from treated water systems does not reach a high enough level to harm plant and animal life in the surrounding area. There is also no evidence that it has effect on lawns or gardens.

# Employees Learn Ways to Take Charge of Their Health



*The iChoices Employee Wellness Program recognizes that the choices one makes are what shapes one's life. The iChoices Wellness team sponsored "Wellness and You: Take Charge of Your Health" August 26 in Montgomery. Jamel Black, personal finance coach, was one of the speakers.*



*So Many Tasks--So Little Time! was the subject of a presentation by Rebecca Jacobson, Resilience, Risk Reduction and Suicide Prevention Program Manager. Other topics included nutrition, physical activity, financial freedom, health care transformation and stress management.*

## Calendar of Events



**September 15**

ARIA Reports, Notifiable Diseases and State-Purchased Vaccines, 1-3 p.m.

For more information, contact the Distance Learning and Telehealth Division, (334) 206-5618.



**October 6**

ADPH Statewide Staff Meeting, 3-4 p.m.

For more information, contact the Distance Learning and Telehealth Division, (334) 206-5618.



**October 26**

Hepatitis C Screening in the Emergency Department, 10-11 a.m.

For more information, contact the Distance Learning and Telehealth Division, (334) 206-5618.



**November 4**

Prematurity Awareness and Initiatives in Alabama to Reduce Infant Mortality, noon-2 p.m.

For more information, contact the Distance Learning and Telehealth Division, (334) 206-5618.



**November 17**

HIV 101, 11 a.m.-noon

For more information, contact the Distance Learning and Telehealth Division, (334) 206-5618.



**November 18**

ADPH Statewide Nurse Practitioner Fall Conference, time to be announced.

For more information, contact Leigh Ann Hixon, (334) 206-5582.